A MANUAL OF METHODISM

AND OF

WESLEYAN POLITY.

BY

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PREFACE.

FROM the "Minutes of the Wesleyan Conferences," and from other sources, I commenced, some years ago, to compile a summary of Methodist laws and usages, to meet the urgent need of a good many persons who desire a succinct and comprehensive view of Methodism and of Wesleyan discipline. Meanwhile, Dr. Williams published his "Constitution and Polity of Wesleyan Methodism." This valuable compendium is, however, too voluminous and expensive for the masses. I therefore issue my book, believing that it is a desideratum. For a more minute and full delineation of Wesleyan Methodism I refer readers to Dr. Williams' volume. Pierce's "Principles and Polity of the Wesleyan Methodists" gives copious details of earlier Methodist polity and its developments. The twenty octavo volumes of "Minutes of the Methodist Conference," with the subsequent yearly "Minutes of Conference," give officially and *in extenso* the laws and regulations enacted to meet the ever-changing requirements of the parent body of that family of churches which together form so large and important a section of the Christian Church.

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A MANUAL OF METHODISM.

CHAPTER I.

METHODISM.

METHODISM is a great fact. According to the last official returns (A.D. 1880) there are, in connection with the various Methodist churches throughout the world, 31,467 ordained ministers, and 4,676,005 church members. Approximately, there are also some 100,000 Methodist lay preachers, with probably more than a quarter of a million other persons who are employed as class-leaders, Sunday-school teachers, stewards, or otherwise, in actively striving to promote the benefit of the Church and the world. The writer on Methodism in the *Edinburgh Review* for July, 1881, rates the Methodist ecclesiastical property in Great Britain and America at twenty-nine millions sterling. He also computes the number of English and American Methodist adherents at nineteen millions. *Whitaker's Almanac* for

1881 says, there are fourteen and a half millions of "Methodists of all denominations throughout the world." The *Saturday Review* (July, 1881) thinks there are about seventeen millions of Methodist hearers and members, and, probably, this is the most correct estimate. Among the millions of persons who attend the Methodist ministry are many others, beside the office-bearers above specified, who are directly or indirectly employed for the diffusion of Divine truth and the extension of Christ's kingdom, one Methodist motto being that those connected with it must be "all at work and always at work" in trying to do good; and Methodism finds a post as well as appropriate duties for all its members who are willing to be employed. The term "Methodists" was applied to a sect of physicians in the century before Christ, who taught that all diseases could be cured by a prescribed methodical course of life, diet, and medicine. The name was also given to those polemical doctors of the Romish Church, of whom the most eminent arose in France towards the middle of the seventeenth century, who, in opposition to the Huguenots or Protestants, adopted a precise method of disputation. Certain Protestants of the same century, as Dr. Calamy informs us, "who stood up for God, were called Methodists." Hence, when John and Charles Wesley, with other religiously disposed collegians at Oxford, began to be very methodical in their course of study, and in their religious and other duties, some one

made the remark, "Here is another set of Methodists sprung up among us;" and they were thenceforth distinguished by this name. As the term Christian has often been one of reproach, so has Methodist. But each of these terms has by multitudes been regarded an honour. Conformists and Nonconformists have alike recognised the beneficial influence of Methodism, directly and indirectly; and whilst some have spoken of it as "Christianity in earnest," or "a revival of apostolical Christianity," there are now few godly persons who do not agree with Wesley, that it is "a great work of God;" for every true Methodist will more or less answer to Wesley's definition of the name—"One that lives according to the method laid down in the Bible."

John Wesley, who, under God, was the founder of the Methodist Churches, was born in 1703. His father was a Church of England clergyman of honourable descent, and his mother was the daughter of Dr. Annesley, a very celebrated and godly Dissenting minister. Till he was eleven years of age John Wesley was mainly under the care and instruction of his very excellent mother. He was then for some years at the Charter House School in London, from which he went to Christ College, Oxford. Subsequently he became a Fellow of Lincoln College, after which he was ordained deacon, and then priest. For a while he was his father's curate, and then for some time a tutor at Oxford. On the death of his father, in

1735, he was urged to take the vacant Epworth rectory, which, however, he declined. Soon after, with his brother Charles, he went to Georgia as a missionary to the Indians. When there he found that, most earnest as he had been in the observance of his religious duties, he had not been "born again," and was therefore destitute of spiritual life and power. Intercourse with godly Moravians enabled him to understand "the way of God" more perfectly; and at a little meeting held in London on May 24th, 1738, at which some one was reading a portion of Luther's writings, Wesley believed on Christ to the salvation of his soul. He immediately began to preach "justification by faith alone" with great fervour.

Soon the churches were closed against him, because many persons objected to the crowds who flocked to hear him, and because others disagreed with the doctrines he preached. Aiming, as he said, at neither pleasure nor profit, but at doing good and spreading true religion, Wesley at once began to preach in the open air, till the necessities of the case required that chapels and other preaching places should be provided for the multitudes who had been gathered from the world and who had no connection with any other church. Then many of those who attended the Methodist ministry were spiritually "awakened," and, coming to Wesley for special instruction and help, he was led to enrol these more serious and Christian persons together in societies and classes, where

they might have efficient and constant spiritual oversight, counsel, and help. At this time, however, Wesley had no design of separating from the Church of England. He did not wish to be the head of any sect or party, and he often declared that he should rejoice if the very name of Methodist could be buried in eternal oblivion. But he as earnestly declared that he dared not but follow the leadings of Providence, and make such arrangements from time to time as seemed necessary for the consolidation and extension of God's work. His brother, Charles Wesley, who had been most actively employed in evangelistic work, and in the formation of the societies withdrew at length from assisting in their rule and management, because he objected to the employment of lay preachers; but by his glorious hymns, as well as in various other ways, he materially helped forward the cause. For about fifty-two years John Wesley travelled, mainly on horseback, on an average 4,500 miles a year; preached two, three, or four times a day, besides holding other meetings and writing some 200 books; and when he died in his 88th year, there were 300 ministers, 1,000 lay preachers, and 80,000 members in the Methodist societies. Wesley had urged that at his death his preachers should seek Divine guidance by prayer and fasting, assuring them that God would thus direct them how to proceed. Following this advice and the leadings of Providence, the Methodist ministers, after Wesley's

death, made such arrangements respecting their worship, the ordination of their ministers, the administration of the sacraments, and other matters of moment, as made them what Providence so manifestly designed—a separate and independent section of God's Church. The Jewish Church developed from the patriarchal; the Christian Church was an emanation from the Jewish; the Lutheran Church, the Church of England, and many other Protestant churches, came out of the corrupt Church of Rome; the Free Church of Scotland separated from the Established Church; and so Methodism, designed by its founder to be an adjunct to the Church of England, followed the manifestly higher behest of the Great Head of the Universal Church, and became a separate and independent organisation.

In 1797 the Methodist New Connexion was formed by the Rev. Alexander Kilham, who with some 5,000 persons separated from Wesleyan Methodism on the ground that they desired laymen should have a larger share in the government of the church.

The Wesleyan Methodist Association was another offshoot from Wesleyanism in 1835, the sole ground of this division also being because of disagreement on the subject of Church government, the principle of the Associationists being that each circuit should manage its own local matters, and the association of laymen with ministers in their annual assembly or conference.

The Wesleyan Reformers separated from Wesleyanism in 1849, on the contention that church members had the right to be present at all meetings for the transaction of church business. These two last-named bodies of Methodists at length amalgamated, and are now known as the United Methodist Free Churches.

The Primitive Methodists (who adopted this name because they wished, as they said, to "walk closely in the steps of John Wesley") were organised in 1811. Their members were gathered, not from any secession from Wesleyan Methodism, but rather from revival services which had been irregularly held at camp-meetings, and in other places, by William Clowes, Hugh Bourne, and other earnest Methodists. The irregular proceedings of these godly and very useful men were disapproved of by their Wesleyan circuit ministers and the Wesleyan Conference. Hence the necessary and providential formation of their societies, and growth of their church, which in government is similar to the Methodist New Connexion.

Another section of Methodists is generally known as Bible Christians. In almost all their church arrangements they closely resemble the other Methodist churches. In their views of Scripture doctrines, all these, with other minor sections of Methodism in England and other parts of the world, as well as the larger bodies of Methodists in America, cordially agree. One exception, however, is that of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, who dissent

from the pronounced evangelical Arminianism of all the other Methodists.

The largest section of Methodists in the world is the American Methodist Episcopal Church North. Methodism was introduced into America about 1768, by two laymen—Philip Embury and Captain Webb. Wesley then sent two of his preachers, Boardman and Pilmoor, and soon after two more, Asbury and Rankin, by whose labours, in a few years, Methodism spread so rapidly that, when in 1784 the States became separated from England, Mr. Wesley appointed Dr. Coke as Bishop of the Methodist churches in America. Coke associated with him Asbury as another Bishop or co-Superintendent (or overseer, ἐπίσκοπος being the same order as πρεσβύτερος, Acts xx. 17, 28) of these churches; and thus a modified episcopal form of government was given to the Methodist Church in America, which also uses an abridgment of the Prayer Book in its services. The Methodist Episcopal Church South divided from that of the North in 1847, because the sections could not agree on the slavery question. There are also large and vigorous African Methodist Episcopal churches in America, which were formed on account of the prejudice against the coloured people on the part of the whites. This month (September, 1881) 400 delegates from the various parts of the world, and representatives of the various Methodist churches, will meet in City-road Wesleyan Chapel, London, at an Œcumenical Methodist Conference. The American

ex-President Hayes will, it is said, as a Methodist, accompany the 200 delegates who come from America. General Grant and his wife, as well as the present American President's wife, are also reported as Methodists. Methodism is the largest religious denomination in America, and in some States it is said to control the political elections. But if, in little more than a century, the little one has become a thousand, and the small one a great nation, no one may either boast or exult on this account. Gideon's army was small, and God wrought a great work by it; so, though the first Methodist band consisted only of "a few raw heads," as was once said, yet God has directly or indirectly wrought a work by this organisation in our own and other lands which, in spiritual results, more than rivals the effects produced by the preaching of the Apostles and their successors. To God alone be the glory, for all the good that is done upon the earth He only is the doer of it. Mr. Wesley expressed the trust that if Methodists possessed a true and living faith, evidenced by works of righteousness, they would continue; but he prayed that, if they ceased to do this, God would blot out the remembrance of them from under heaven. We rather pray that Methodism and all other sections of God's Church may flourish in greater purity, spiritual power, harmony, and usefulness—as the various regiments of a grand and united army—mightily to aid in extending God's kingdom and in blessing the world.

CHAPTER II.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.

IN the rules of the Wesleyan Methodist Society, published by the Rev. John Wesley in the year 1743, he defines the Society as a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united together in order to receive the word of exhortation, to watch over and pray for one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation. Mr. Wesley divided his societies into classes of about twelve persons in every class, one of whom he styled the leader. It is his business, say the rules, "To see each person in his class once a week, to inquire how their souls prosper; to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require; and to receive what they are willing to give towards the support of the gospel." These contributions of a penny weekly and a shilling quarterly (very poor members often giving much less, and richer members often giving much more) are handed by the leaders to the stewards, that Gal. vi. 6, and 1 Cor. ix. 14, may be observed. The leader's duty is to inform the minister of any who are sick, or

of any who require special attention. Mr. Wesley's rules state, "There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies, viz., 'a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and be saved from their sins.'" But the rules (a copy of which can easily be procured) go on to specify that those who really have this "desire" will abstain from evil ways, many of which are then expressly cited; they will also endeavour to do good, especially in the manner which the rules specify. Moreover, "They will attend upon all the ordinances of God," such as are also then enumerated. It is likewise remarked as to these various scriptural rules, "If there be any among us who observe them not . . . we will admonish him of the error of his ways, we will bear with him for a season, but then, if he repent not, he hath no more place among us."

To become a member of the Wesleyan Methodist Church a person must join a society class. At the weekly meetings of the classes, after the leader has given his own religious experience, or views, or feelings with respect to some particular spiritual truth or truths, he addresses each member of the class personally. Usually every member has an opportunity of stating his or her views, feelings, or experience of religion (though, of course, response is optional), upon which the leader is expected to give each member the doctrine, the reproof, the instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17), the comfort,

the encouragement, or such other address as he deems most suitable; just as the medical man, who studies the case of each of his patients, gives to every one the medicine or treatment most likely to benefit. Methodist members have often remarked that their godly leaders have seemed inspired to speak "a word in due season" to the different members, from which some have benefited inexpressibly; whilst the mutual sympathy, the fervent prayers, the enforced self-examination, and all the other privileges of this special means of grace make it peculiarly prized by those "who hunger and thirst after righteousness." Worldly persons, formalists, and some others, rarely relish such a spiritual service. The first Christians continued in "fellowship;" they also believed in the "communion of saints;" and the Methodists provide for this fellowship, or communion, or intercourse, in their weekly class meetings. Persons absent from the class should be visited by the leader, or a proxy, or in special cases by the minister, weekly. Every class is visited by one of the circuit ministers quarterly, by whom tickets of church-membership are renewed; and after minute examination as to the religious knowledge, experience, and practice of the members, the minister gives to each such encouragements, addresses, and counsels as he deems suitable.

Mr. Wesley urged Band meetings upon his people. These are the association of three or four earnest Chris-

tians together, for more confidential religious intercourse and mutual prayer. Public Band meetings are presided over by a minister or leading layman. At these, godly people relate their religious experience, and mutual profit is also sought by frequent singing, prayers, and brief addresses.

Society-meetings are also held by ministers for their church members, though sometimes other persons are allowed to be present. At these services the minister addresses his flock familiarly on their personal, or family, or other duties; and frequently at these meetings special observations are made, according to the circumstances of the particular company addressed.

Lovefeasts are social means of grace where all the members of a particular church or locality meet for the relation of Christian experience. On the first Sabbath of each year Methodist members also meet, as far as practicable, to renew their covenant with God. This is a solemn and impressive service, to which, as well as to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the church members are admitted; though usually the ministers give notes of admission to serious applicants. Some ministers invite penitent seekers of salvation, and Christian persons generally, to join in these special means of grace.

When persons wish to join a Methodist class meeting, the leader should give them the "Rules of Society" the first time they meet. Usually, on the recommendation

of the leader, the new member receives a note on trial from the minister who first meets the class at the quarterly visitation, unless such new member has met two or three months, and can be well recommended by the leader for full membership. After two or three months' trial (or in some cases a much longer time), a full member's ticket is given, if the person is deemed fit to be received as an accredited member. The leaders' meeting has the right to declare any person on trial unfit to be received into society, to whom the minister may not then give a ticket. But only doubtful or difficult cases are usually referred to the meeting of leaders. New members have to be formally, solemnly, cordially, and affectionately recognised at a society meeting, a lovefeast, or a sacramental service, as soon as practicable after receiving their first ticket of membership; and if any person has not been previously baptised, this sacrament should then be administered.

On removing from one circuit to another, a member is supplied with a note of removal from his minister, or through his leader, to the minister of the society where he may go.

Unworthy members usually withdraw from the society; but when a person has been guilty of an offence deserving of punishment or expulsion, such offence must be proved to the satisfaction of a leaders' meetings; which meeting has also to declare whether or not the facts alleged are violations of the law of God or of Methodist law. No

sentence of expulsion can be pronounced till at least one week after the trial of the accused person, during which time the superintendent (who has to decide the sentence) has to seek information from individual leaders and other judicious and experienced members; and he has also to confer with his colleagues at their weekly meeting. In the case of an alleged violation of the peace and order of the society, either the superintendent minister, or the accused person, may have a second hearing of the case before a special circuit meeting, composed of twelve persons to be appointed by the circuit quarterly meeting, and presided over by the chairman of the district. In extreme cases, affecting godly order and discipline, a special district meeting may be appealed to by either of the parties concerned. In addition to all the ministers of the district, in full connexion with the Conference, each party may choose two other ministers from any other district, and the president of the Conference may attend and preside at this meeting, which may modify, reverse, or confirm the sentence against which the appeal is made. In cases of continued dissatisfaction with the finding, either party may appeal to the Conference, who will re-try the case by a committee, or by a special deputation, and generally decide the case as far as possible, "according to truth and to the requirements of Holy Scripture and of our discipline." In cases affecting moral character, the appeal from a leaders' meeting is first to a minor district

meeting, which is composed of five ministers—two of whom are chosen by each party concerned in the trial; and over this meeting the chairman of the district presides, unless he be a party concerned, and then the four ministers shall choose their own chairman. After the minor district meeting, an aggrieved person may appeal first to the annual district meeting, and then, if still dissatisfied, to the Conference.

Other regulations—on a charge being preferred against a member of society—are, that if no leaders' meeting be statedly held in the place where he resides, or is a member, the case is "to be referred for investigation to the leaders' meeting of the principal society in the circuit town;" and "the leader or leaders and the steward or stewards of the society of which the accused is a member are to be associated with the leaders' meeting" which investigates the case. When the accused member is a chapel trustee, all the trustees of the chapel of the society with which he is a member, who are members of society, should be present with the leaders' meeting, and join in trying the case; or if there be no chapel where the accused is a member, then the trustees of the chapel of the principal society in the circuit town who are church members, shall join the leaders' meeting. A trustee or his accuser may appeal to the same courts as a private member.

When a Wesleyan church member fails in business, or compounds with his creditors, it is the duty of the super-

intendent and a steward to converse with him freely; and if there be suspicion of unfair or blameworthy conduct, the superintendent with two or more competent persons appointed by the leaders' meeting shall furnish a report to the leaders' meeting, which shall then condemn or acquit the accused. On the appointment of this committee on a local preacher, leader, or steward, the exercise of his functions shall be discontinued until his case be decided. "If those who fail in business afterwards acquire property, it is their plain duty to pay their whole debt," says Methodist rule. When a person has been expelled from the society for gross immorality or wrongdoing, such a person may not again become a member without the sanction of the leaders' meeting.

Wesleyan ministers are required, if possible, to hold a weekly children's meeting where they reside. Junior society classes for the religious instruction and godly training of young persons are also to be generally established. The leaders of these classes are not members of the leaders' meeting, nor are the young persons under their care regarded as church members. The minister has, however, to meet them quarterly, and then give, or renew, tickets to those judged fit, defining their relation to the church.

CHAPTER III.

CIRCUIT ORGANISATION.

A METHODIST circuit is the specified district which is under the care of a superintendent minister, whom the Conference appoints for a term not exceeding three years at one time. A circuit may comprise but one or two preaching places; usually, however, there are several, and sometimes many, chapels and preaching places grouped together to form the circuit, in which case the superintendent may have one or more ministerial colleagues, with a sufficient number of local preachers for the regular supply of all the places under his care. The circuit appointments are arranged on a printed plan, made and issued periodically by the superintendent or one of his colleagues. In every circuit leaders' meetings are held at the various places in the circuit. Those composing the leaders' meeting are the ministers of the circuit, including any minister on trial, the class leaders of the particular society, the society stewards, and the poor's stewards. The circuit stewards are members of the leaders' meetings of the particular

societies to which they belong. At every leaders' meeting the class books should be produced; the minister is informed of any sick persons or others requiring attention; the leaders hand over to the society stewards all moneys they have received for the support of the ministry; the society stewards audit the class-books, one society steward keeping the accounts, and the other taking charge of the money. The poor's stewards then report what moneys they have in hand from the collections made at sacramental services and at the quarterly lovefeast, when the meeting decides what sums shall be given to the sick and aged, or other poor and needy church members. When a new leader is required, the superintendent or his deputed colleague must satisfy himself as to the proposed person's piety, orthodoxy, and qualifications; then, whilst nomination must be made by the minister, the leaders' meeting accepts or rejects the nomination. Leaders are appointed to particular classes for life; though on removal, in the event of being suspended from church-membership, if their class becomes extinct, or under other circumstances, their office terminates. At the first leaders' meeting held after Christmas the society and poor's stewards are nominated by the minister, and appointed, or re-appointed, or rejected by the meeting. In smaller societies there may be but one steward for each of these offices; in very small societies one steward for both; usually, however, there should be two stewards, who are not leaders, for both the

society and for the poor; and, ordinarily, none of these stewards may hold their office for more than three years successively. Twice a year inquiry has to be made in the leaders' meeting as to the moral character and attention to duty of each member of the meeting. The leaders' meeting also must approve of Juvenile Society Class Leaders, Assistant Leaders, Prayer Leaders, and one-third of the committee of the Sunday-school. The leaders' meeting may depose any officer or teacher from the Sunday-school whose character or religious opinions unfit him for the office he fills. When a new leader is first introduced into the meeting he must be welcomed by the minister, who is *ex officio* always the chairman, and then told what are his peculiar duties. Whilst every leaders' meeting should be as religious in its tone as possible, one or two meetings every year must be specially devotional and spiritual. In addition to their considering all society matters, and deciding questions relating to the moral character of those whose fitness for membership may be questioned, the leaders' meeting may also memorialise Conference on subjects affecting the interests of their particular society. In addition to the above specific duties, the society stewards must be present in the vestry to meet the minister before public worship; to give notices for the pulpit, in writing, of all immediate local arrangements made on the circuit plan; to advise with the preacher about other announcements; to provide for the

celebration of Baptism when this sacrament has to be administered; to have the collections made as appointed, and to take charge of the moneys till they can be paid to the superintendent or other proper person; and also to provide homes, when needed, for the officiating preacher; and, when travelling expenses are paid, to see that these are defrayed.

The stewards for the poor not only receive and disburse (by direction of the leaders' meeting) the moneys collected for the poor, but they also provide the bread and wine for the Lord's Supper, and the bread and water for the lovefeast.

Local preachers are church members who, without remuneration, assist the ministers in preaching to the various congregations in the circuit. Many of these, though employed during the week in manual labour, are men of devoted piety, superior gifts, and great usefulness. All candidates for the Methodist ministry are taken from their ranks. The local preachers' meeting is held every three months: the superintendent of the curcuit presides, and along with his colleague or colleagues also any supernumerary ministers, with all the local preachers in the circuit, are members of this meeting, at which also those on trial for the office of local preacher may attend, though they are not entitled to vote. At this meeting inquiry is made respecting every lay preacher (the name of each name being called over), whether there is any objection

to him as to his moral and religious character, whether he believes and preaches Methodist doctrines, if he observes Methodist discipline as to meeting in class, etc., also, if he attends to his appointments, and has ability for the work. Should a charge arise affecting moral character, this must be referred to the leaders' meeting with which the preacher is connected. But the local preachers are responsible to their own quarterly meeting for every part of their official conduct, which meeting has the right to censure, suspend from preaching, or otherwise punish an unfaithful and unworthy person. When a preacher has been on trial about twelve months, and has read Mr. Wesley's standard sermons and his notes on the New Testament, after having preached a trial sermon, he is examined by the superintendent before the members of the local preachers' meeting as to his religious experience, why he believes he is called to preach, and his knowledge and belief of Methodist doctrines, especially human depravity, the divinity and atonement of Christ, the divinity and work of the Holy Spirit, repentance, faith, justification, regeneration, and the eternity of future reward and punishment. If the report of the trial sermon, and also the *viva voce* examination, be satisfactory, the candidate is received as a fully accredited local preacher by the votes of the meeting. Otherwise he may remain on trial, or be placed on a list of "exhorters," or "prayer-leaders," who are usefully employed in many localities to conduct

cottage or other services. Before any person is received on the local preachers' plan on trial the superintendent "must certify that he has passed a satisfactory examination in the Second Wesleyan Methodist Catechism and in the elements of English Grammar." Before being received on the plan, the person must also be heard to preach, or give a public address or addresses, and the reports as to his piety and gifts must be satisfactory. The local preachers' meeting also decides on any alteration as to places on the plan, and the times of holding the services at them.

The circuit quarterly meetings are held about the close of September (in the beginning of which month the ministers changing circuits enter upon their new spheres of labour), also about the close of December, March, and June. The members of this meeting are all the circuit ministers, including supernumeraries and those on trial, the two circuit stewards, all the class leaders, society stewards, and poor's stewards in the circuit; also all trustees of chapels in the circuit who are members of society; likewise all local preachers of three years' continuous standing, after having been twelve months on trial. Junior local preachers are generally allowed to be present, but they have no vote. At, or an hour before, the quarterly meeting, the society stewards pay to the circuit stewards all moneys they have received for the support of the ministry and other circuit objects, the

ministers' allowances and other expenditure are arranged for, and the circuit stewards present to the meeting their financial statement of the quarter's income and expenditure. At each quarterly meeting the superintendent reports the number in society in each place in the circuit, and a conversation generally follows as to the state of God's work in various places, and how it can be best advanced. The quarterly meeting must consent to the enlargement, erection, purchase, or sale of any chapel, school-room, or other trust-property in the circuit. The division of any circuit must be considered, and the formal passing of this measure must be at the March quarterly meeting. When no local preachers' meeting can be held in any circuit, a lay preacher may be proposed at, and passed by, the quarterly meeting. Each of the four quarterly meetings has its especial business. At the September meeting the Circuit Treasurer for the Worn-out Ministers' Fund is appointed. The superintendent may propose this official, but he has not the right of nomination. Any new rule adopted by the preceding Conference has to be read to this quarterly meeting, which may suspend the operation of the said rule in the circuit for the year. At the December quarterly meeting the circuit stewards are appointed or re-appointed. The superintendent has the exclusive right of nominating them, but the meeting can accept or reject such nomination. Home Mission stations may have only one circuit steward. In

December the circuit chapel secretary is appointed, and it is arranged when the annual united trustees' meeting shall be held. A Circuit Home Missionary Committee is appointed, when necessary, at this meeting. The March quarterly meeting invites the ministers to continue their services in the circuit another year, or others may then be invited to succeed them. At this meeting candidates for the ministry, if there be any in the circuit, must be nominated by the superintendent, which nomination the meeting approves or rejects by its vote. Before ministers can apply to the Contingent Fund, through the district meeting, for a grant towards the expenses of afflictions, the March quarterly meeting must decline to meet this expense. In March the circuit stewards must declare their ability and willingness to attend the district meeting, for if either or both of them cannot do this, the vacancy or vacancies must be supplied by the open vote of members of the quarterly meeting from amongst themselves. The statistics of the circuit Day and Sunday Schools are presented to this meeting, and also the numbers in the junior society classes.

The June quarterly meeting more fully considers the state of the circuit Day and Sunday Schools, supposing this not to have been done in March. The June quarterly meeting may also memorialise Conference, on condition that at least ten days' notice of motion in writing has been given to the superintendent of any resolution to

be proposed as the basis of a memorial, which may be amended by the meeting. On passing the meeting, the manuscript memorial must be signed by members of the quarterly meeting within a week, and then given to the superintendent, who is responsible for its delivery to the president of the next Conference on or before the second day of its session. Quarterly meetings must approve of lay agents who are employed by the District Home Mission Sub-Committee; and quarterly meetings, or the Circuit Home Mission Committee, can engage, remove, or dismiss a lay agent, on giving notice to the District Home Mission Sub-Committee.

Circuit stewards are the most important of circuit lay officers. In managing the finances of the circuit they are expected to make necessary provision for the reasonable comfort of the ministers, with due consideration for the resources of the circuit. They communicate with the Conference, through their representative to the Stationing Committee, the wishes of the circuit as to ministerial appointments; they represent their circuit in the May and September district meetings; they are expected to initiate the invitation of ministers for the next year; on their declining to nominate, the matter is then entirely in the hands of the quarterly meeting. The circuit stewards, with the superintendent minister, have annually to audit the accounts of all the chapels in the circuit. Their office ceases at the end of every year, and no one

may remain in this office more than three years, except in some extraordinary case.

Trustees' meetings, or meetings of the trustees of chapel or other Methodist property conveyed to them in trust, are summoned when necessary. An annual meeting of the trust must be held, of which each trustee must have fourteen days' notice to attend, when the accounts for the year are presented, and the treasurer, the secretary, and the stewards for the next year are appointed. At the trustee meetings the superintendent of the circuit is the only minister who has a right to attend and vote. The other circuit ministers, as a matter of courtesy and convenience, often attend and take part in the transaction of business; but they have no right to do this, or to vote. When, however, the superintendent cannot attend, he may depute a colleague to take his place, who then possesses the power and privileges which belong to the superintendent. Ordinary meetings of trustees may be called, with two or three days' notice in writing, specifying the time and place of meeting, and signed by two trustees or by the superintendent. Meetings for proposing to sell, alter, let, or purchase property, etc., are regarded special, and fourteen days' notice must be given of these in writing from two trustees or the superintendent, specifying the time, place, and purposes of such meeting. When the superintendent cannot or will not attend a trustee meeting, he may appoint a deputy in writing; when neither a super-

intendent nor such deputy is present, a majority of the trustees may appoint their own chairman. Any chairman of a trustee meeting has a casting vote, in addition to the vote he has as superintendent, deputy, or trustee. The trustees themselves appoint the chapel stewards and their own treasurer, the superintendent having no right of nomination in these cases. Trustees withdrawing, or excluded from the Methodist Society, do not cease to be trustees; but on continuing out of the society for six months they may, on being requested in writing by a majority of the other trustees, but not otherwise, and on receiving a bond of indemnity from them, be called on to relinquish their trust to the other trustees or to new ones. When new trustees have to be appointed, the superintendent has to nominate twice the number of names to be chosen (unless surviving trustees be satisfied with a less number), and the old trustees must choose from these the persons to be on the new trust.

Wesleyan Sunday-schools are managed by a committee which includes the ministers of the circuit, the treasurer, the general secretary, the superintendent of the school, and of six, nine, or more persons, one-third of whom must be teachers, secretaries, or librarians in the school, and be chosen by the teachers' meeting; another third must be members of society, and chosen by the leaders' meeting; the other third, if not members of society, must be members of the congregation, and chosen by the retiring

committee. The committee meet once a quarter, or oftener, and are presided over by the superintendent of the circuit or his colleague, five members forming a quorum. If no minister be present, the meeting may elect its own chairman. The teachers must be of good moral character and orthodox in creed, or their services may be dispensed with by the committee, or by the leaders' meeting. After three months' trial, suitable teachers are nominated and elected at a teachers' meeting, which must be held quarterly, and at which, if no minister be present, the superintendent of the school shall preside. A united meeting of the committee and teachers should be held every six months, to recognise new teachers and give them the rules, with suitable counsel and encouragement.

Wesleyan Day-schools are under the care of a local committee, including the circuit ministers, the treasurer, the secretaries, visitors, and a suitable number of the friends of education. These schools should be regularly visited by the ministers.

Bands of Hope must be managed by a committee composed of circuit ministers, a treasurer, a conductor, a secretary, and a registrar, who shall be members of society, and, if possible, officers or teachers in the Sunday-school, with six or more persons, half of whom should be abstainers. Wesleyan Methodist Temperance Societies are founded on the principle of the co-operation of abstainers and non-abstainers. "Two-thirds of this com-

mittee at least must be members of society, and the remainder regular attendants on the Wesleyan Methodist Ministry." The superintendent of the circuit is *ex officio* the Chairman of the Temperance Committee.

CHAPTER IV.

INSTITUTIONS AND FUNDS.

EVERY circuit in Methodism must arrange for the support of its minister or ministers. To provide for this, and for circuit expenses, collections are made in every chapel each quarter. Every member also contributes a penny a week and a shilling a quarter, if able (more or less); in many cases hearers give quarterly subscriptions; chapel trustees often give grants from their surplus income; and poor circuits receive help from the Connexional Home Mission Fund, as well as occasionally from the local District Sustentation Fund. The allowances to ministers who have children, and to married ministers who have no family, are, usually, exactly the same; but their income is equalised, very nearly, by the allowance of six guineas a year for each child under a certain age, from the Children's Fund. This Children's Fund is provided by every circuit contributing at the rate of about seven pounds annually per hundred members in the circuit. Thus, no circuit is burdened by having a large family to support, nor is a circuit eased

which may have a minister or ministers without children. The more wealthy circuits generally subsidise the connexional allowance by an additional two guineas, per child, more or less. By the Kingswood and Woodhouse Grove Schools' Fund, some hundreds of children of Wesleyan ministers receive a good education at the above schools; besides which there are two girls' schools. The Schools' Fund is provided by annual collections, about November, in all the chapels, by private subscriptions, supplemented by an allowance from the Children's Fund, as parents do not receive allowance from this fund for a child when at a connexional school. Ministers who do not, or cannot, send their children to one of the schools, are entitled to an allowance for education for children between nine and fifteen years of age.

The Wesleyan Foreign Missionary Society has, under God, accomplished great good in the past, and is now a flourishing institution. Mr. Wesley sent missionaries to America, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and the West Indies. After Mr. Wesley's death, Dr. Coke superintended these missions, and got or gave funds for their support. When Coke died in 1814, the Wesleyan Missionary Society was organised; since then it has occupied and vigorously worked missions in Ireland, British North America, France, Australia, and the South Seas, all which have now their own Conferences, and are in most respects independent of English Methodism.

Wesleyan Missions are now also established in Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ceylon, India, China, South Africa, Western Africa, the West Indies, and Central America. The receipts of the Wesleyan Missionary Society are about £140,000 per annum. Donors of £10, and subscribers of £1 1*s.* and upwards, are members of this Mission Society, and are entitled to a copy of the annual general report and the monthly *Missionary Notices.* Subscribers of ten shillings annually are entitled to a copy of the monthly *At Home and Abroad.* The funds for sustaining this society are raised by annual collections in the chapels and at missionary meetings, by missionary boxes, and by subscriptions and donations received by collectors. The affairs of the society are managed by four ministerial secretaries, and a committee of at least twenty-four ministers and twenty-four laymen, some of whom retire annually by rotation. Wesleyan missionaries are chosen, as indeed are all Wesleyan ministers, by the votes of their respective circuit quarterly meetings; then, after examinations, by the district meetings, the London Committee of Examiners, and, finally, by the Wesleyan Conference. Mission candidates generally have three years' training at the Missionary College in Richmond, Surrey. A missionary accused of misconduct or of heterodoxy is tried by the Foreign District Meeting with which he is connected, according to Methodist rule and usage. The General Mission Committee may recall any

missionary, who may be put on trial before a committee of superintendents of London circuits and other ministerial members of the General Mission Committee. The Conference confirm, modify, or set aside the decision arrived at by a Foreign District Meeting, or by any other committee. The Ladies' Wesleyan Missionary Auxiliary for female education, and for Zenana work in China, Ceylon, India, and Africa, is also an important branch of Wesleyan Foreign Missions.

The Wesleyan Home Mission and Contingent Fund is managed by a committee of fifty leading ministers, and fifty influential laymen, one-fifth of whom are changed annually. This committee meets monthly. The funds are raised by a yearly collection in March, from members of society, of sixpence each (more or less); congregational collections in some Sabbath in October in all Wesleyan chapels; public meetings held annually where practicable; subscriptions, donations, etc. By this fund small and poor circuits are assisted to support their ministers, whom they could not maintain without such help; Home Missionary ministers are also supported, in whole or in part, in needy localities where there is likelihood of usefulness. Ministers appointed to labour for the benefit of the Army and Navy, and also district missionaries who spread their services over many circuits, where they hold revival missions, etc., are supported mainly by this fund. Contingent expenses caused by

affliction or by the death of ministers, lawsuits affecting Methodist interests, and other claims deemed legitimate by the committee, are also defrayed from this fund. Approved lay agents are likewise supported, in many localities, in great measure, by grants from the Home Mission exchequer. The yearly income of this most useful fund is only about £35,000.

The Wesleyan Chapel Fund realises about £8,000 annually from yearly collections in Wesleyan chapels made in February; from subscriptions, donations, legacies, and grants from the trust funds of chapels. A Chapel Committee of thirty ministers and thirty laymen meet in Manchester monthly. They give advice and consent as to the building or alteration of chapels and other trust property in all cases where circuit superintendents, quarterly meetings, district meetings, or district chapel sub-committees have already approved. The Chapel Committee disburse the funds at their disposal in helping to build new chapels, and in assisting to lessen or liquidate debts on other chapels and trust property; sometimes by grants, at other times by loans without interest.

By the Education Fund collection, made in Wesleyan chapels about April, assistance is given in training Wesleyan Day School teachers in Westminster and Battersea Colleges. Wesleyan Day Schools are also frequently helped from this fund, as also the connexional Sunday School Union.

In the Theological Institutions at Richmond, Didsbury, Headingley, and Birmingham, those who are received as candidates for the Wesleyan ministry are trained religiously and intellectually for their great work. Public collections and subscriptions are taken in December or January each year for this important preliminary instruction of young ministers.

The Worn-out Ministers and Widows' Fund makes a very moderate provision for supernumerary ministers who are unable to take full work through affliction or the infirmities of age, and for the widows of deceased ministers who may need such assistance. Members of society are requested in September to contribute sixpence a year (more or less) towards this fund, and a collection is made annually about July. Subscriptions and donations in June also afford help towards this necessary and merciful object.

The Extension of Methodism Fund was originated mainly by the munificence of the late Sir Francis Lycett and W. Mewburn, Esq. By the help of more wealthy friends, and a large grant from the Thanksgiving Fund, it is expected that £100,000 may be realised. The objects of this fund are to help in maintaining Home Missionary Ministers in localities where there is at present no Methodism, and to assist in erecting or enlarging Wesleyan chapels.

There are now three, and will soon be four, Methodist

Children's Homes and Orphanages, in which hundreds of orphans and destitute boys and girls are receiving a religious and useful training. These are under the care of Rev. T. Bowman Stephenson, B.A., LL.D., and are largely supported by Christians of other denominations besides Methodists.

Other institutions and funds, not directly connexional, may have a brief notice. The Wesleyan Seamen's Mission has a ministerial superintendent, who, with efficient lay agents and an earnest Bible-woman, is labouring effectively amongst the thousands of sailors who are constantly to be found in and around the various docks at the East-end of London. Whilst the funds for this important mission are raised by donations, subscriptions, and collections in London and elsewhere, its operations are managed by a strong and judiciously chosen committee of ministers and laymen interested in seamen. The Metropolitan Methodist Lay Mission and the Manchester and Salford Lay Mission employ suitable male and female agents in mission halls and rooms in conducting meetings. They provide too that their agents shall spend at least twenty-five hours a week in visiting; and that these agents shall also distribute useful literature, etc. Influential committees and wise regulations manage these missions, which are supported locally.

The Metropolitan Chapel Building Fund owes much to the liberality of Sir F. Lycett, William McArthur,

Esq., M.P., and other generous friends. By grants of money, and loans without interest, this fund has largely helped to build chapels in London and its suburbs (each capable of holding a thousand persons), where there was insufficient accommodation for God's worship. Some school chapels are also erected with help from this fund.

Including chapel anniversaries, Sunday-school anniversaries and, in some localities, collections for hospitals or other local objects, as well as for the poor, etc., it is found that careful arrangement is needed in order to prevent collections being made oftener than once every three Sundays. But Methodists usually are large-hearted and generous givers. The few grumblers are generally those who allow the collecting plate to pass without any —or, considering their circumstances, a very paltry— contribution from them.

Special funds have from time to time been raised by those who have believed Methodism to be a great work of God, and have desired to consolidate and extend it. In the centenary year—1839, £224,267 was raised for various and most important Methodist projects in this country, and in connection with the Foreign Missionary Society. When Methodism was temporarily crippled in some of its funds and operations by a disastrous agitation and division, over £77,000 was raised in 1853 as a Relief and Extension Fund. In 1864, nearly £189,000 was contributed as a Jubilee Fund to aid and extend

the Wesleyan Foreign Missions. And at the present time a Thanksgiving Fund of over £300,000 is likely to be raised, by which both Foreign and Home Missionary operations will be greatly aided and extended; the building of Wesleyan chapels will be promoted; a new Theological Institution is provided, and will, probably, be partially endowed; another Orphanage is being built (large sums having been given expressly for this object); all Methodist funds will be cleared from debt; a new and, it is hoped, a cheaper arangement will be made for the educating of Methodist ministers' children; provision will be made for aged local preachers; help will be afforded for the employment of more lay agents; and other wise appropriations of the money that may be raised will be made by the Mixed Conference, which is composed of 240 ministers and 240 of the leading laymen in Methodism. This Mixed Conference not only reserves to itself the entire disposal of the amount raised by the Thanksgiving Fund, but it also supervises all the other funds and institutions of Wesleyan Methodism.

CHAPTER V.

THE MINISTRY.

THE Wesleyan ministry is recruited almost entirely from the lay preachers of the connection. When a young preacher of undoubted piety and superior gifts believes that he has a Divine call to devote himself entirely to the Wesleyan ministry, his superintendent and colleague or colleagues in the circuit must hear the aspirant preach, and they must satisfy themselves, as far as possible, that he understands, believes, and will diffuse such views of truth as are held by the Methodists; and that his qualifications generally are such as are likely to make him an able and useful minister of Christ. Being satisfied on these points, the superintendent of the circuit nominates the candidate at the March quarterly meeting—the vote of which meeting decides his acceptance or rejection. In the event of the candidate being accepted, his superintendent must furnish a written report of his piety and moral character, his gifts and abilities for the ministry; he must also testify to his having read Wesley's doctrinal sermons and notes on the New Testament, and his belief

of Wesleyan doctrines, his acquaintance with and approval of Methodist discipline, his freedom from debt and secular encumbrances, etc. If the candidate has not resided two years in the circuit by which he is recommended, a report must likewise be furnished from his previous superintendent. Every candidate has to preach before three ministers, who are nominated by the chairman of the district after the March meeting. These furnish a written report of the sermon and service, and their judgment as to the preacher's likelihood for the ministry. At the annual district meeting of ministers in May, each candidate has to pass a *vivâ voce* examination as to his religious experience, his call to the ministry, his knowledge and belief of Methodist doctrines, especially as to the divinity and offices of Christ, the personality and deity of the Holy Ghost, human depravity, the atonement and its universality, the nature and necessity of repentance towards God, also the nature and need of living faith in Christ, justification, adoption into God's family, the witness of the Spirit, regeneration, entire sanctification, the possibility of falling from grace, the necessity of obedience to the moral law, and the eternity of future reward and punishment. A sub-committee of ministers has also to subject each candidate to a literary examination, and to estimate by marks the replies to the questions. When the district committee of ministers have the report of the superintendent, of the literary examiners, of the ministers on the

sermon preached, and have themselves heard the *vivâ voce* examination, they either recommend him to the Conference or decline his offer of service. The recommended candidate has then to preach another trial sermon before some other minister who has not before heard him preach officially; and the report of this sermon, with the reports already referred to, as well as the character of the vote by the district meeting, whether unanimous or not (if not, the numbers for and against), are to be forwarded to secretaries for the information of another committee of examination appointed by Conference. This committee of leading ministers meets in two sections in July, and submits all the candidates to further oral and written theological and literary examinations, after which, weighing all the information gathered respecting each man, it recommends or declines to recommend him to the Conference. The July committees also give their judgment whether the approved candidates are more fitted for Foreign missions or for the Home ministry. The Conference finally considers every case that has been recommended by the District Committees, though it seldom accepts candidates who are not approved by the July committee. Married men are very seldom received into the Wesleyan ministry, unless they can make such pecuniary arrangements as will relieve connexional funds from undue burdens. Very rarely, either, are the ministers of other churches received as Wesleyan ministers. For a while some candi-

dates accepted by the Conference are placed on the President's list of reserve, and from this list vacancies in circuits, caused by the affliction or death of ministers, etc., are supplied till the next Conference. But all accepted candidates, as far as possible, have three years' training at one of the Wesleyan theological colleges. The third year at college is reckoned as the first of probation. If a man is called from the list of reserve into circuit work before Christmas, and continues in it till the following August, this term also reckons as the first year of probation. The period of probation for the Wesleyan ministry is four years. Each probationer has to pass a yearly examination as to his reading, and in four specified subjects, including Greek and Hebrew (unless there be sufficient reason for excusing these last-named subjects). Probationers for the ministry are members of all circuit meetings (except trustee meetings), and can vote at them. But they have no vote in district meetings, or at the Conference. Neither may they administer the sacrament of Baptism or the Lord's Supper, except in extreme cases; and arrangements have to be made for their receiving the Lord's Supper. For financial and other reasons young ministers may not marry till the expiration of their probation, except by permission of the Conference. Before the termination of their probation candidates for ordination have to preach before three ministers, who have to give their report of the sermon, etc., to the

May District Committee, which also receives the report of the candidate's superintendent, and examines him as to his present religious experience, and his knowledge and approval of Methodist doctrines and discipline. The results of each yearly examination of the candidate have also to be before the District Committee, which then recommends the Conference to receive and ordain him, to continue him on trial, or even to drop him from the list of probationers. Recommended probationers attend the next pastoral Conference, at which they are privately examined by the president and senior ministers; they are also publicly examined before the Conference. If these last examinations are satisfactory, the probationers are received as fully recognised ministers by the solemn vote of the Conference, and on the following day they are ordained by the imposition of the hands of leading ministers; after which the ex-president delivers to them a charge. Thenceforth they may administer the Sacraments, and attend to all the functions of that ministry to which it is believed they are called by Christ, and which is fraught with such tremendous issues to the church, the world, and themselves. By pastoral visits and their ministry they have to build up and perfect members of the church, whom they have also to associate with them in evangelistic efforts for the salvation of the perishing. No person may be scheduled as a backslider without, if possible, a visit from a minister.

All ordained ministers appointed to a circuit are reckoned on an equality in their relation to Christ and His work. The superintendent is, however, *primus inter pares*—first among equals, for he presides at all official meetings in the circuit, and he must also direct and watch over his colleagues, the local preachers, and other workers in the circuit, seeing, as far as possible, that every department of work is efficiently supplied and worked according to rule or usage. Home Missionary ministers are appointed in some localities, who, being supported in great measure by the Wesleyan Home Mission Fund, have to labour especially amongst the neglecters of religion and public worship. Other Wesleyan ministers are employed for work mainly for the advantage of the army, the navy, and merchant seamen. District missionaries spread their labours over many circuits in specified localities, under the direction of the chairman of the district, in organising and conducting special evangelistic services, etc. Where there are two or more circuits in a town, it is advised that all the ministers in them should meet once a month for consultation and prayer. The ministers of each circuit are required to meet weekly for conference and prayer in relation to their work in every part of their circuit. The appointment of each minister is made for one year only at each Conference. These appointments may be terminated at the end of the first or second year after the

minister's first going to the circuit, should he elect to leave, or should a majority of the circuit officials decline, at the March quarterly meeting, to invite him to remain. For a third year's appointment the vote should be virtually unanimous, else the case may be specially inquired into by the Stationing Committee. No minister can be appointed longer than three years consecutively to any circuit. In Scotland he may return to his old circuit after an absence of three years. In England he must be absent from an old circuit eight years before he may be re-appointed. Nor may a minister remain more than six years consecutively in any one town or city.

To connexional offices at the Theological Institution, the Foreign and Home Missions, the Book Room, etc., ministers are appointed for six years (except the Institution House Governors, who are appointed for three years only). These appointments are annually confirmed, or may be set aside, or ministers may be re-appointed to these positions for a second or further term of years without any break. When a minister has to be elected to any connexional office the committee of the department vacant nominates three persons. Other names may be added to this list by the Conference, and then the election of the Conference is made by ballot.

Twice every year, at the district meeting and at the Conference, the inquiries are made respecting every minister and preacher on trial—"Is there any objection to

his moral and religious character? Does he believe and preach our doctrines? Has he observed and enforced our discipline? Has he competent abilities for our work?" When a complaint or charge is about to be brought against a minister, he should have notice; but full and particular investigation is made as to every alleged delinquency. The Chairman of a district may institute inquiries respecting any minister under his jurisdiction at a Minor District Meeting (composed of two ministers chosen by the accuser, two by the accused, and presided over by the chairman; or should the chairman be involved as an accuser, by the president of the Conference, or a minister chosen by the other four), which Minor District Meeting, like the Annual District Meeting, may suspend and silence from preaching, or otherwise punish or acquit, the person tried. Should either party be dissatisfied, an appeal may be made from the Minor District Meeting to the Annual District Meeting, and from this to the Conference. The Conference fully investigates every case specially brought before it by a large and influential committee, the recommendation of which is usually adopted, though any case of discipline is fully discussed and considered in the full Conference when occasion requires.

Chairmen of districts are elected by the ballot of the Conference, and without nomination. The chairman of a district convenes the annual district meeting, at which

he presides, and he is responsible for the observance of Methodist law thereat, and through his district, as far as possible. He also presides at the District Committees relating to chapels, schools, home missions, etc. He has also to visit each circuit in his district where only one minister is appointed, if possible, twice a year, and when a quarterly meeting is being held. On important occasions, and when invited by the superintendent of other circuits, the chairman may be present at their quarterly meeting. And at other times, when his intervention may be an advantage to any circuit, he may and ought, after consultation with the superintendent, to visit it. But the chairman may not set aside the superintendent, or administer discipline, except in peculiar cases. He advises and assists, but does not supersede, the superintendent, except at special circuit meetings. When a circuit supply is required, through the suspension, the affliction, or the death of a minister, the application must be made through the chairman, who must satisfy himself as to the merits and needs of the case. When elected, each chairman nominates his financial secretary, who is then elected on the meeting of the District Committee. This secretary's duties are numerous and onerous in relation to all the connexional funds in the district, as well as the business at the District Committees. He has also to provide three copies of the minutes of the annual district meeting, one for the president and secretaries

of the Conference, another for the use of himself and his chairman at the Conference; the third is to be kept with the district records. The Ministerial District Education Secretary must collect information as to Wesleyan Sunday and Day schools in the district, and present the report, and any suggestion or resolution thereon, to the district meeting. The District Chapel Secretary has similar duties in relation to all the Wesleyan Chapels and other trust property in the district. The Probationers' Examination Secretary takes charge of the examination of the preachers on trial in the district, and furnishes the report to the district meeting, and to the General Examination Secretaries. The District Secretary of Home Missions must get all information concerning the labours of lay agents in the district, and report to the district meeting, and to the Home Missionary Committee. The District Temperance Secretary collects all details of Wesleyan Bands of Hope and Temperance Societies in the district, for use at the district meeting, and by the Wesleyan General Temperance Committee.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DISTRICT MEETINGS AND CONFERENCE.

THERE are thirty-four Wesleyan Districts in England and Scotland, averaging more than twenty circuits each. A Financial District Meeting is held in every district yearly, about the middle of September. The superintendents of circuits are required to attend, and their colleagues and circuit stewards, as well as the treasurers of various funds, the lay members of the district chapel, Sunday schools, and also home mission sub-committees, with the foreign mission district secretaries, are invited to be present. The Financial District Meeting decides what grants shall be allowed from the Home Mission Fund to the dependent circuits in the district; arranges for providing additional ministers' houses where required; appoints deputations to attend home mission meetings in the district, and settles the amount the circuits give to or receive from the Children's Fund. It also appoints district treasurers of the Children's Fund and the Worn-out Ministers' Fund; the district probationers' examination secretary, and the place for

their examination; it chooses the district education secretary, and makes arrangements for examining pupil teachers in religious knowledge, besides appointing the District Sunday School Sub-Committee, and the Home Mission District Sub-Committee and its secretary. The treasurer and committee of the District Sustentation Fund, the District Temperance secretary, the District Chapel Sub-Committee, and its secretary or secretaries, are next fixed upon. The erection, purchase, enlargement, sale, or relief from debt, of chapels or other trust property is considered; and arrangements are made for holding foreign mission anniversaries in the district; whilst the expenses of holding previous anniversaries are investigated to ensure due economy.

The Annual District Meeting held in May each year is an important gathering. All the ministers in the district are required to be there present unless prevented by affliction. During its pastoral session ministers only are present, and then particular inquiries are made respecting each minister and preacher on trial as to his ministerial character and ability, and his observance of Conference regulations in various matters. When any minister or probationer belonging to the district has died during the year a brief narrative of his character and labours is read to the meeting. The retirement of ministers as supernumeraries, etc., is considered; the numbers of church members, and of those in junior society classes, in the

several circuits, is stated; also the number of the military in attendance at chapel and at class. Particular regard is given to the work of Home Mission ministers, Army and Navy ministers, and District missionaries; also to the duties of pastoral visitation and the religious oversight of the young. The state of God's work in the district is earnestly considered, and suggestions are offered by leading ministers and others for its greater prosperity. The result of the examination of the ministers on probation, and the lists of books they have read during the year, are next reviewed. The cases of candidates for ordination, after four years of probation, and of candidates for being received on trial for the ministry, with other subjects, are also very carefully discussed and decided upon by the ministers in their pastoral session.

When financial and other topics are sifted, the circuit stewards or their elected lay substitutes, the lay treasurers of connexional funds, the district treasurers of Foreign Missions and of the District Sustentation Fund, the lay members of the District Chapel Sub-Committee, of the District Sunday School Committee, and of the District Home Mission Committee, who are members of society, are earnestly desired to be present with the ministers. When ministers and laymen are thus associated, the amounts from each circuit for the Home Mission Fund are paid in. Three-fourths of the increase may be distributed by the meeting to poorer circuits or ministers in

the district. Any extraordinary expenses incurred on account of affliction, removals, supplies, furnishing of houses, etc., are considered, and grants to help in meeting these may be recommended to the Home Mission and Contingent Fund. The Home Mission work in the district is discussed, the claims of the district on the Home Mission Fund are adjusted, and the obligations of any circuit to provide for a married instead of a single minister are noted. The receipts of the District Sustentation Fund are disposed of; any division or alteration of circuits, and any increase or decrease of ministers in the district, are also recommended to the Conference. The ministers or laymen elect their representative to the Stationing Committee, whose duty it is to aid in arranging the next year's appointment for the ministers and circuits that may be changing. The laymen alone nominate, and then decide by ballot what laymen for their district, being members of society, shall attend the next Conference. The affairs of the Worn-out Ministers and the Ministers' Widows Fund are investigated, with ordinary or extraordinary claims on it. The relief, erection, purchase, enlargement, or sale of chapel or trust property is next decided upon, both retrospectively and prospectively. Educational affairs in relation to both Day and Sunday schools are considered. The business of the Ministers' Children's Fund, and also of their schools, are both attended to. The temperance work in the district is

gone into, the collections and subscriptions to foreign missions and other funds for the past year, for each circuit, are reported. The ministers and laymen, if they desire, forward any suggestion to the ensuing Conference; and they also consider other subjects which are referred to in the "Order and Form of Business in the Districts Committees," published by the Wesleyan Conference office. The ministers arrange at the district meeting which of them may attend the next Conference during its pastoral session, and then which of these may also attend the Mixed Conference. The District Committee, when composed of ministers only, may memorialise the Conference.

London Wesleyans provide for the Conference every eighth year, and during other years provincial large towns or centres claim this distinction. About the second week in July, each year, the Stationing Committee, of about forty leading ministers chosen by the District Committees, meet in the Conference town to arrange a preliminary draft of appointments of Wesleyan ministers for the ensuing year. This draft is subsequently revised in committee, and in Conference, till it is confirmed, about the ninth day of Conference, by its solemn vote. The annual Conference assembles on the third Tuesday in July, each year, in the city or town fixed upon the year before. The Legal Yearly Conference is composed of one hundred ministers only. Mr. Wesley made this arrangement by

a Chancery Deed of Declaration in 1784, and by this deed the Conference is obliged to meet every year for not less than five days, nor for more than twenty-one days. Forty members of the Legal Conference must be present to make its action valid. This Legal Conference, however, associates with itself all ordained ministers who have permission to attend its sittings, the decisions of this whole Conference being adopted and confirmed by the separate vote of the legal hundred. The first business of the Pastoral Conference (which now usually numbers about five hundred ministers) is to fill up the vacancies in the Legal Hundred caused by death, or by superannuation for two years, except that those who have been presidents of the Conference, with others, can only be set aside from the Legal Hundred by vote of the Conference. Alternate vacancies in the hundred are filled up by the ballot of the Legal Conference from a list of senior ministers; the others are filled up by nomination from the ministers who have travelled at least fourteen years. All ministers of ten years' standing give written votes for one of the named ministers, or for any other eligible minister, and the person who receives the largest number of votes is then elected by the separate vote of the Legal Conference. Ten members of the Legal Hundred are nominated by the Irish Conference from their number, and elected by the Legal Conference.

The President of the Conference is elected from those

members of the Legal Hundred who have not held that office during the preceding eight years. There is no mention of any name or names when the President and the Secretary are annually chosen, but each minister of ten years' standing gives a written vote for the minister he deems most eligible for these positions respectively, after which the members of the Legal Conference elect the person thus nominated. The President has the privilege and power of two members of the Conference during his year of office. He presides usually at all important connexional committees. He visits Scotland to attend the financial district meeting, and to assist at missionary anniversaries. He attends one of the Welsh district meetings. From the list of reserve of accepted candidates for the ministry he supplies vacancies in circuits, caused by death, affliction, etc. He may also assist at district meetings, or visit any circuit requiring his counsels or aid. Other important functions are vested in him. Arrangements are made to fill his place by the last surviving president in case of his death, or incapacity through illness, etc.

The Secretary of the Conference, who may be re-elected year after year, has also onerous and important duties devolving upon him in relation to chairmen of districts, superintendents of circuits, etc., and on his ability and tact the conduct of Conference business is greatly facilitated or otherwise. Assistant secretaries and official

letter writers are also appointed at the commencement of each Conference, retiring officials being thanked.

A Conference prayer-meeting is held to invoke God's blessing on the assembly and its deliberations. Representatives of other Conferences give written and verbal addresses, and arrangements are made for preparing replies. Appeals, memorials, and suggestions from individuals, circuits, or districts are then presented, and committees are appointed to consider these and other subjects requiring careful consideration. Notices of motion must be presented to the Conference early, and may not be discussed till after the lapse of twenty-four hours. Brief obituaries of deceased ministers are read. Ministerial character is investigated, and any complaint or charge is usually referred to an efficient committee. It is also decided who may become supernumeraries, or what retired ministers may resume their full work again; what probationers may be received as fully accredited ministers, and ordained; it is also determined who shall remain on trial, and what candidates may be received on trial; and whether accepted candidates may go to the Theological Institution or be placed on the President's list of reserve. The Conference next judges what circuits or districts may be altered or divided, or may have more or fewer ministers. Ministers are also appointed to departments. The reports of committees on appeals and ministerial character are considered when ready. The

number of members in society is stated, and this is followed by a conversation on the state of God's work, and how its greater prosperity can be secured. The pastoral address of the Conference to the Societies is read and adopted. A day is then taken for the ordination of those young ministers who are received into full connexion, to whom the ex-president delivers a charge. On re-assembling, after electing the chairmen of districts, (who nominate their own financial secretaries) it receives the report of the Committee on Memorials and Suggestions. The replies to the addresses of other Conferences are adopted. Missionary deputations and official appointments are arranged. Appointments are made in relation to the next yearly Conference, the stations are revised and confirmed, remaining reports of committees and notices of motion, with other miscellaneous business, are disposed of, and the pastoral session closes with the reading, the confirmation, and the signing of the Conference Journal.

The Mixed Conference is composed of 240 ministers and 240 laymen, some of whom are elected by the preceding Conference, and others by the district committees, whilst others are *ex officio* members of this Conference. Ministers having permission to attend the Pastoral Conference and lay members of connexional committees may also attend the Mixed Conference, but, not having been elected to it, they may not take part in the delibe-

rations or voting. At this Mixed Conference, after devotional exercises, the President gives an official address. Memorials and suggestions from district committees are then received, and a committee is appointed to consider and report on them. Notices of motion are next given. Committees are appointed to arrange important connexional business. The Wesleyan Home Missions, Ministerial and Lay, including also agencies for the Army, Navy, and merchant seamen, the state of the funds, and requests for home mission changes or extensions, are then considered. The state and working of District Sustentation Funds are next reviewed. Chapel affairs generally, in England, Scotland, and Wales, especially too in London, are subsequently investigated, with the state and disposal of the several funds relating thereto. The extension of Methodism and the prosperity of God's work are earnestly discussed. The management of the Theological Institutions, the Schools for ministers' children, the Children's Fund, the Worn-out Ministers' Fund, the education and care of Methodist youth, Temperance, the religious observance of the Lord's day, Foreign Missions, and other important miscellaneous business, occupy the attention of the laymen and ministers, as, on behalf of all Wesleyan Methodists, they review the past, present, and prospective state of all funds and finances, and how God's work in its different Wesleyan departments may be most effectively

carried on. This Mixed Conference, like the pastoral one, is closed by the reading and confirmation of their portion of the Conference Journal, which is then signed by the President and the Secretary.

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